


LITTLEMORE ASYLUM.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

FOR

1847.

(INCLUDING SOME STATISTICS OF 1846,—ON THE 1st OF AUGUST
IN WHICH YEAR THE ASYLUM WAS OPENED.)



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b30311020>

LITTLEMORE ASYLUM.

[comprising an union of the Counties of Oxford and Berks, the City of Oxford, and the Boroughs of Abingdon and Reading, for the maintenance of their Pauper Lunatics.]

At the first Meeting of the Committee of Visitors of the PAUPER LUNATIC ASYLUM at LITTLEMORE appointed for the Year 1848 held at the Asylum (pursuant to due Notice) on Wednesday the 26th day of January 1848 (being within one Calendar month after the election of the present Committee)

PRESENT

JOSEPH WARNER HENLEY Esquire, M.P. Chairman,

The REV. PHILIP WYNTER D.D.

JAMES MORRELL Junior Esquire,

JOHN HENRY ASHHURST Esquire,

EDMUND CURRIE Esquire,

JOHN SAMUEL BOWLES Esquire,

THE REV. NATHANIEL DODSON,

WILLIAM HENRY BUTLER Esquire, and

WILLIAM THORP Esquire ;

Resolved that the following

REPORT*

of the SUPERINTENDENT presented to this Meeting be printed and circulated.

To

* RULE 25.—[of the General Rules of the Asylum.] The Superintendent shall submit to the Committee of Visitors, at their first Meeting after the Oxfordshire Epiphany Quarter Sessions annually, a Report, in writing, of the general condition of the Asylum, and the number and character of the Patients; distinguishing the numbers who have been received and discharged as cured; the number of readmissions; the number employed, and in what manner; the deaths which have occurred in the preceding year, and also the total number of discharges, cures, and deaths since the opening of the Institution, and specifying the sexes in each statement; with such other facts as the Superintendent may think desirable, or which the Visitors may have suggested.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF VISITORS.

I beg to submit to you the following Report as to the condition of the Asylum and of the Patients.

The following is a summary of the Admissions, Discharges, and Deaths from the date of the opening the Asylum on the 1st of August 1846 to the end of the year 1847.

	1846.			1847.			Total.		
	Male.	Female.	Total.	Male.	Female.	Total.	Male.	Female.	Total.
ADMISSIONS.									
Within the first year of the first attack	5	7	12	16	13	29	21	20	41
Not of the first attack	4	6	10	5	12	17	9	18	27
At unknown or more distant periods of attack	42	58	100	13	12	25	55	70	125
Total	51	71	122	34	37	71	85	108	193
DISCHARGES.									
Recovered within 2 years of first attack	1	2	3	8	7	15	9	9	18
Relieved					1	1		1	1
Recovered within 2 years not of first attack	1	3	4	5	7	12	6	10	16
at subsequent periods	3	1	4	1		1	4	1	5
Removed				1	1	2	1	1	2
Total	5	6	11	15	16	31	20	22	42
DEATHS.									
Within 2 years of the first attack				4	1	5	4	1	5
Not of the first attack					2	2		2	2
At more distant periods	1		1	5	4	9	6	4	10
Total	1		1	9	7	16	10	7	17
Remaining on 31st December, 1847.							55	79	134
Readmitted having been discharged in		1	1	1	3	4	2	3	5

This Asylum is peculiarly circumstanced ; for, by its recent structure it affords a clearness of atmosphere in the Wards, (impossible to be maintained when crowded) ;—a spaciousness, and amount of room for every Patient (greater than it is calculated can be permanently allowed to each) ; and a degree of quietness, (which will be unattainable when, with increase of numbers,—increase of infirmity, or violence will also be introduced :)—so that it may be expected that a favorable return will follow the advantages afforded.

The Littlemore Asylum is also peculiar in this, that it is the only Institution in this part of England which has at present been opened under the provisions of the new Act of Parliament.*

All the Pauper Lunatics chargeable to Parishes in the County or City of Oxford have been received ;—no recent cases having been refused from want of accommodation in the Asylum ; and none rejected or sent away because of dangerous illness, liability to Fits, or to make room for others, who more imperatively required an asylum in the House.

The present brief history then, of this Institution affords an interesting test of, or addition to the various opinions founded on the statistics of Lunacy, so far as small numbers can supply trustworthy evidence. Dr. William Farr, in his Report on the Returns of the Metropolitan Asylums published in 1841, says of the ten years preceding :—That 18 in 100 of Pauper Lunatics die annually in the first year and a half after the commencement of their malady ; and 8 in 100 annually during the next six years ; that the Recoveries are 19 per cent. in the

*8 and 9 Vic c. 126.

first case, and only 3 per cent. in the second ;—the annual rate of Mortality and Recovery being greater in the acute than in the chronic stage of Insanity.

Now, in the Littlemore Asylum, of 128 Survivors of the first attack of Insanity, (who did not forthwith recover,) 4 only have been discharged from the Asylum, who have not returned after a short interval, and 10 have died. This result accords most closely with the statistical return. Of the remaining 114 I am able to recommend to the present Meeting of the Visitors that one Female shall be discharged, her continued progress towards a calm and steady state of mind encouraging me to hope, and satisfying her friends, that she can be comfortably and properly provided for by them. There will then remain 113 Patients, whose best prospect of an alleviation of their Malady consists in the arrangements and comforts provided for them by this Institution.

Of the administration of these comforts by the several Attendants and of their general co-operation, I must speak with gratitude; for they have acted with a kind, humane, and generous spirit.

The following statistics will illustrate the foregoing remarks with reference to the Littlemore Asylum.

Of 68 persons admitted into the Asylum within the first year of their attack 7 have died, (the proportion being one half of that in the Metropolitan Asylum); 36 have left the Asylum, of whom one (from his better condition in life) was transferred by his Friends to the Warneford Asylum; and 3 (who had had several previous attacks,) have been readmitted.

The great advantage of admitting Patients in the earliest stages of their attack is proved in all Asylums. Of the 25 Patients remaining of the above 68, it may be remarked that 14 were admitted within the last 6 months. And of the other six 3 have suffered from severe illness which cannot be said to have terminated; and three are of the respective ages of 69, 75, and 78.

The number of Patients in 1847 (after deducting the re-admissions) was 177. The number of Recoveries, 26. And the number of Deaths 16.

The proportions are—Deaths 9 per cent., Discharges 15 per cent.

Dr. Farr says that at Hanwell the numbers of admissions of Males and Females are nearly equal; but that the number of Women, who remain long in the Asylum, is 36 per cent. greater than the number of Men. The Men both recover and die more rapidly than the other sex. The discharges annually from the Hanwell Asylum of Patients cured, or relieved, were 11 per cent. of Males and only 8 per cent. of Females.

Dr. Thurnham in his publication of 1845, says “The opinion which has recently obtained, that Insanity is more prevalent among women than among men has, I believe, originated in an erroneous method of statistical analysis. It is well known that in this Country there is an excess of Females over the Males. According to the census of 1841 there was an excess of about 8 per cent. at all ages above 15 or 20 years:—it being 12 per cent. from 20 to 30,—6 per cent. from 30 to 40,—and 4 per cent. from 40 to 50 years of age.”

A great difference also in the rate of mortality between males and females is nearly always to be noted, the relative difference varying exceedingly in nearly every Institution, the Statistics of which Dr. Thurnham has had the opportunity of examining.

Dr. Forbes Winslow however, has this year put forward an opposite opinion, adding; “ It is important to remark that the Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy presented to Parliament during last Session, like the former similar document, supplies further evidence adverse to Dr. Thurnham’s particular views.”

The numbers of admissions to the Littlemore
Asylum of Patients having had no pre-
vious attack, are

	Females	Males
	20	21
Of whom have been discharged	10	9
have died	1	4
now living	19	17
Numbers having been previously attacked	18	9
Of whom have been discharged	10	6
have died	2	0
now living	16	7
Chronic Cases discharged	0	5
died	4	6

It will be seen therefore, that the number of Females predominates in those who have had previous attacks; and that the greater mortality among the Men gives an increasing excess on this side. And from the number of readmissions it appears that the Females are the more liable to a return of the Malady.

The average age of Patients admitted after recent attacks is

	Females	Males
	45 years,	43 years,
Chronic cases	47	42

It is a frequent complaint that many Patients are sent to Asylums in a state of health so extreme that they unfairly increase the ratio of Mortality. We have not been free from this. It occurred that one young Female died of Abscess of the Lungs on the sixth day after admission; that a Male Patient died of Paralysis, on the ninth day after his removal; that another died in ten days after his removal from a Workhouse, he not having recovered from a severe illness; and a Man prostrated by Fever and having also Abscess of the Lungs, died nineteen days after admission; and other Patients admitted in a state of Maniacal excitement have died within short periods after their admission.

In a disease so fatal as Insanity, a certain number of Patients in the most acute form of it, and dangerous even to the verge of death, must be expected. The experience of all public Institutions which admit cases of emergency, shows that the exigencies of the Public will require the admission from time to time of Patients of this class. It is the spirit of the great Charity which founds such Hospitals in every district of the Country, to require that they shall be prepared for, and encourage the admission of the most recently attacked, and of the most violent and dangerous,—and therefore of those among whom the greatest mortality is likely to occur. And the same spirit dictates the more ready attention to that larger class of Patients, from amongst whom the Recoveries cheer the prospects of those conducting the institution, and claim the confidence of the Public in it.

The last year (1847) commenced with unusually severe weather. That coughs and colds were almost unknown among the Patients is due to the very excellent arrangements made for warming and ventilating the Wards. In the early part of the year there were two deaths by Fits, one by suicide, one within ten days of admission, and two by the more ordinary course of nature. About Midsummer a period of intense heat set in; and it was felt by the more debilitated class of Patients most oppressively; and in five weeks from the 15th of July eight Patients died; of whom

5 had diseased Lungs

1 was Paralytic; and

2 died by the exhaustion of acute Mania.

At later periods of the year one died of abscess of the Lungs and one of the Paralysis of the Insane.

The previous occupations of the Patients have varied in such proportions as might be expected in an agricultural District, where the Towns also, are for the most part not manufacturing. One third of the Males as well as of the Females are found incapable of any useful occupation. Of the Men who work, a third are, in suitable weather, generally employed in the garden or in some other out door occupation. Others of both sexes are employed at intervals in the domestic work of the House. And a few being always unable or unwilling, the proportion actually at work may be generally about a half.

There are in the House three Tailors who have been of some service. The only Shoemaker who had employed himself is discharged. A Carpenter makes himself a very useful man in household work.

In a small Asylum the peculiar occupation of each Patient cannot be easily developed. There have been Soldiers, Butchers, Sawyers, Hawkers, Fellmongers, Schoolmasters, Clerks, Bookbinders, Wheelwrights, Linen Drapers; and more than one Medical Man. Such of the Patients as can work follow readily the light occupation of the garden.

For the Females—needlework, the Laundry, and House work, are the three principal means of employment. The needle women have made 976 articles of wearing apparel and have knitted 93 pairs of Stockings,—besides the mending, making minor articles, and assisting in making up articles of Ward Furniture.

Occupation has been the great amusement of the Patients; and generally the most appropriate. Few look for greater amusement than the ordinary habit of their lives; namely quietness, thoughtlessness, freedom from care, and having their hands and eyes occupied in what they retain a certain knowledge of. They prepare the ground for the crops, and take much interest in a good return; they also contemplate with pleasure the participation in the fruits of their labor. The needle work provides every requisite for the enjoyment of the Females, who have as much pleasure in their own company, as the men have in the open air.

Both Males and Females attend reading classes with the Chaplain, who takes a pleasure in the pleasure it gives them. He has also writing classes among the junior servants, to whom he regularly attends, and by his punctuality, kindness, and consideration, ensures a ready observance of his hours.

It must not be omitted in this statement that at the beginning of the year an Entertainment of music and dancing was given to the Patients, in which both sexes joined. It was much enjoyed; and their is great anxiety shewn for its repetition at this season. The allowing the sexes to meet on the occasion was not what has been usual in Pauper Asylums. It is however, practised in some of them; and I am not conscious of any tendency to ill consequence proceeding from that meeting.

It is right that I should notice the state of the Asylum as regards its assets and expenses. It is known that on a small number of Patients the expenses must necessarily be heavy, especially at the opening of the Asylum. At the commencement of last year there were 110 Patients in the house; but at its close there were 134; the average number being 125. The total charge for the maintenance at 11s. weekly, amounted to £3583 17s. 4d. The cost of Provisions consumed amounted to £1547 18s. 5d. or 4s. 9d. a head, per Patient, per week; Salaries and Wages £1104 2s. 8d. at the rate of 3s. 4½d. a head; necessaries including Coals, Soap, Candles, &c. £573 15s. 5d. at the rate of 1s. 9d. per head; and Clothing, Furniture, Garden expenses, &c.; amounting to sums which will altogether arrive at about 11s. per head; but as the accounts will be prepared in minute detail and will go before the Finance Committee for audit, it is not necessary that I should attempt complete accuracy in a review of the expenses.

The greater economy from the greater number of patients could be shewn by comparison with the expenses of the year 1846, in which, with quite as great a disposition to economy, the cost of Provisions in a cheaper market was 4s. 8½d.; Salaries

2s. 11½d.; Necessaries 2s. 8d.; making a total of 10s. 4d. per head, per week.

The contracts have been taken as follows :

	July 1846.	December.	March 1847.	June	September.	December.
Bread . . .	5½d.	7d.	7d.	8d½.	6d.	6d.
Flour . . .	38/.	50/.	50/.	65/.	42/.	41/.
Meat . . .	4½d.	5½d.	5½d.	6¾d.	6d.	6½d.
Milk . . .	7d.	7d.	7d.	8d.	8d.	8d.

At Hanwell in 1845, when the cost of Flour per sack was 37s., the cost of Provisions for the Patients was 4s. 3½d. per head. In 1846 the cost of Flour being 46s., the cost of Provisions for Patients was 4s. 6d. The average cost of Flour to this Asylum last year was 52s. the Provisions for patients 4s. 8d. The house expenses at Hanwell, including the miscellaneous expenses, in January 1846 was 1s. 8¼d.; the Salaries and Wages being also 1s. 8¼d.; the clothing was 8¼d. per head. It appears that the economy of the greater numbers will fall especially on the household and such expenses as Coal and Oil.

The time is come when it was promised that the Male Patients of the County of Berks should be received into this Asylum. The promise was given in February last and the number of Male Patients at that time in the Asylum was 46; twice that number may be accommodated; we have now 59 Male Patients in the Asylum.

But though it appears that there are now in Licensed Houses 52 Lunatics and Idiots, belonging to the County of Berks, and exclusive of the Borough of Reading; yet, as it is necessary that a certain number of beds should be reserved for the reception of persons recently taken ill, and, as it is manifest that the Counties contain a greater number of Lunatics than was supposed when the arrangements for their reception were in contemplation, it would not perhaps be prudent at the present time to remove more than half of those now in the Licensed Houses; for, only under such an arrangement, is it probable that all recent attacks may continue to be admitted, until the proposed enlargements are made. Whether the Committee of Visitors will still consider that the plans for the intended enlargement of the Asylum will be sufficiently extensive, is a question which I must recommend to their consideration.

I have the honor to remain,

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient Servant,

WILLIAM LEY,

Superintendent.

Littlemore,

January 25th 1848.